The Search For Norma Randall. . .
Is Over!

By Samuel Claesson

Editor's Note:

Samuel Claesson is a bestselling author whose books include Top Models (2023), Terry (2024), *and* Glamour: Models, Mannequins, and Pinups of the 1950s (2025) *with Sequoia Press. He has written for numerous magazines and newspapers including* Classic Images *and* Western Clippings *with many of his articles centered on films of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.*

Norma Randall with the Stooges in a publicity shot from *Spooks!* (1953)

For years now, Three Stooges researchers have been trying to determine whatever happened to supporting actress Norma Randall, the beautiful blonde who appeared in three different Three Stooges films of the early 1950s. While a number of previously "lost" players have been tracked down in recent years, Randall's whereabouts have always remained a complete mystery. No one has been able to locate her alive, yet no record of her death has ever turned up either.

The *Three Stooges Journal*'s previous efforts to track down Randall were documented by Ryan Fay in his article "The Search For…Norma Randall" which appeared in issue 149 (Spring 2014).

As a refresher, Randall first appeared on the scene in early 1953 when newspapers reported that she had signed a contract with Columbia Pictures. Later that year, she was selected to be the "Queen" of the California International Flower Show and was also named "Miss Powered Flight" in honor of the 50th anniversary of the first powered airplane flight.

In April 1953, Randall began her association with the Stooges. Her trio of appearances with them began with *Musty Musketeers*. This remake of the Stooges' 1948 short, *Fiddlers Three*, was filmed on April 27. Randall plays "Millieth," one of the Boys' girlfriends.

The very next day, Randall was back in front of the camera, again working on another Stooges remake, *Pals and Gals*, a redo of 1947's *Out West*. In this one Randall plays Nell's sister, "Zelle." For some reason, both *Musty Musketeers* and *Pals And Gals* would stay in the can for about a year as neither film was released until well into 1954.

Randall's most prominent Stooges role came in *Spooks!*, a 3-D short filmed from May 11-14, 1953. Ironically, Randall portrays a missing blonde (named "Bea Bopper") who the Stooges locate. *Spooks!* was released only a month after filming to capitalize on the then current 3-D craze. So while this was Randall's first released film with the Stooges it was actually the last one she worked in with them. Aside from her work with the Stooges, Randall had only three other known film roles. These were all small roles in a trio of 1953 Columbia features, *Cruisin' Down The River, Mission Over Korea* and *The Big Heat.*

Norma Randall graces two foreign magazine covers from 1953-54.

After the middle of 1953, Randall completely disappears from show business and no traces of her have popped up since.

While I'm not a huge Three Stooges fan, I do love doing film research, and have authored several books about actresses from the Golden Era of Hollywood. So when I learned from Three Stooges fan club President Gary Lassin that actress Norma Randall was a considered to be a "lost" player, I set out to see if I could track her down.

The *Journal*'s researchers had done a very thorough job sorting through all of the available information about Randall. They dug through census records, birth and death records, multiple genealogy sites, *Variety*'s archives, newspaper archives, player directories, and even fan magazines of the day. They checked with some of Randall's contemporaries such as actresses Diana Darrin, Sylvia Lewis and others if they remember her, but none did. They finally concluded that Norma Randall was almost certainly just a stage name and unless her real name was uncovered, she would probably go unfound. The hope at that time was that she could still be alive (as she would have been in her low 80s) and that when the 1950 census was released in 2020, new information might be revealed, but that was not the case.

Because the *Journal* staff had already exhausted conventional sources, I thought I would try an outside-the-box approach. I decided to run some photos of Randall through a facial recognition program called PimEyes. It turned up a match with a woman named Marilyn Lindberg who bore an unmistakable resemblance to Randall. A little research revealed that Lindberg was from Los Angeles (a good start) and was employed as an actress and model (even better!).

At this point, things were looking very promising, but there was still nothing definitive to tie Lindberg and Randall together. Further digging turned up a death record for Lindberg, and this is where the case was finally solved….Marilyn Linberg's date of birth was listed as September 5, 1930, the same date listed as Norma Randall's date of birth at IMDB (which they obtained from the Screen Actors Guild)! Combined with the photographic and employment evidence, it was now clear that Norma Randall was merely a stage name used by Marilyn Lindberg.

Now armed with her birth name, an avalanche of new material has been uncovered answering many (but not all) of the questions about her life and career. Here's what has been learned.

Norma Randall in a 1950s publicity shot.

Marilyn Charlette Lindberg was born on September 5, 1930 to Roy and Emily Lindberg in Evanston, IL. She was the second child in the family, her older sister Dolores was born about four years earlier. According to the 1940 census, the family moved to Philadelphia sometime before 1935 and eventually settled in Upper Darby, PA. Roy Lindberg owned and operated Lindberg Piano, located at 19th and Walnut in the Rittenhouse section of the city, before both the family and company relocated to the Los Angeles area.

As a teen, Linberg modeled and was featured in nationally syndicated newspaper features. The July 13, 1947 edition of the *Hartford Courant* pictured a 16-year-old Fairfax High School junior Marilyn Lindberg donning a polka dotted coat. The 1948 *Colonial*, Fairfax High's yearbook, shows that she was a member of the graduating class of 1948.

That fall, Lindberg enrolled in the University of Southern California as a drama major, while maintaining her modeling side career and trying her hand at acting. A 1948 *Los Angeles Mirror* photo caption reads "campus cover girl…with screen tests in the offing, Marilyn wants to stay at SC." In the spring of her freshman year, she won the title of Pi Kappa Alpha's Dream Girl, a prize she was awarded by director Cecille B.DeMille and actress Heddy LaMarr. The fraternity who sponsored the event was chaired by Lindberg's future husband, Ryland Rexford Perry of Winchester, VA. She was cast in the campus production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* staged in August 1949. The 1950 *El Rodeo*, USC's yearbook, pictures sophomore Marilyn Linberg among the members of the Delta Delta Delta sorority. In that year, she was awarded the “Miss Junior America” title.

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Norma Randall. . . *continued*

Fresh off her selection as "Miss Cleopatra" title win by the Beverly Hills Shriners Club, Marilyn married Ryland Rexford "Rex" Perry, a personal relations agent, in Los Angeles on June 24, 1950. For a time, she was referred to in the LA-area press as "Marilyn Perry" or Mrs. Rex Perry. According to a 1950 edition of the *Daily Trojan*, USC's student newspaper, Lindberg withdrew from the university after her wedding. During the early years of her marriage, Marilyn continued modeling and was pictured as a USC hostess.

For a southern California society fixture, it was curious that newspaper mentions of "Marilyn Perry" ceased after January 5, 1953. It was then that Marilyn resurfaced as "Norma Randall" arriving on the scene on January 29, 1953 in a *Los Angeles Times* drama blurb that announced that the "21-year-old USC co-ed" had been cast in Columbia Pictures' upcoming feature film *Cruisin' Down the River.*

Norma Randall in her 1948 high school yearbook photo as Marilyn Lindberg.

Norma Randall as Queen of the California International Flower Show.

The fleeting star of Norma Randall's brief Columbia career continued through the first half of 1953: her three feature films appearances and three two-reel comedies with the Stooges were all filmed between mid-January and early May.

The last references for Norma Randall appeared in December 1953. And just as suddenly as she appeared on the scene, "Norma Randall" retreated, paving the way for Marilyn Perry's return.

Now as Marilyn Perry again, she made an appearance in the 1954 Debbie Reynolds vehicle, *Athena*. That feature was filmed from late March to early May 1954. A production image from the film features Perry being serenaded by teenage idol Vic Damone. You can see her uncredited role here: https://youtu.be/eVbkwzosPYY. During production, Perry was photographed in the *Valley Green Sheet,* promoting her father's piano store in Van Nuys.

Rex and Marilyn Perry divorced sometime before 1959, but we have yet to uncover a California divorce record. Rex Perry died in San Francisco in 1962 under somewhat mysterious circumstances. Newspapers reported that Perry was found dead in his apartment with multiple bruises on his body and had been dead for about ten days before being discovered. An autopsy was performed but the results were not made public.

Marilyn Lindberg married her second husband, Rollins Fred Cordary (aka Rol Cordary) on August 2, 1959. This marriage was not tracked in the local newspapers like her first one was, so little is known about the couple's time together. They divorced in 1970 and after some additional research, it was discovered that Cordary (now in his 90s) isstill alive and living in the Los Angeles suburbs. Unfortunately, he did not respond to mail or phone attempts to contact him.

Her third and final marriage was to Los Angeles engineer Donald V. Athons. They married in Las Vegas on January 26, 1972. According to her mother's (Emily Lindberg Berry) 1996 obituary, the couple were residents of San Juan Capistrano, CA. This was corroborated by other contemporaneous residence records. Donald V. Athons died on November 13, 2002.

While it was hoped that she'd still be alive, sadly, Norma Randall died as Marilyn Athons on December 10, 2002 at the Silverado Senior Care facility in Corona, CA.

Norma in a 1950 magazine ad.

The Stoogeum staff requested and received a copy of Marilyn's death certificate from the state of California. Her occupation is listed as a homemaker and it shows her causes of death as "acute myocardial infarction" and "artherosclerotic cardiovascular disease."

The death certificate also notes that she suffered from bipolar disorder, and lists a Pamela Migliozzi as the informant of her death. Some digging revealed that Migliozzi was actually Marilyn's step-daughter, one of third husband Donald Athons' children from a previous marriage, and was still alive. Migliozzi was contacted to to see what information, if any, that she could provide. Although she did not have a lot to add to what was previously known, she did have this to say:

I wish I could be of help to you. My Dad married Marilyn in 1972. He did tell me that Marilyn was in films early in her life, long before they met. My Dad passed away in November 2002 and Marilyn passed away just a month later in December 2002. My Dad was very ill with cancer several months before his passing. Due to his rapidly failing health as well as Marilyn's extremely frail condition, he arranged for me to be her conservator. She spent the two months of her life in an excellent care home. I visited her a number of times before her passing. However, she never discussed her early life with me. She was a gentle, loving soul. However, she was also a very private person.

The name Normal Randall was never mentioned to me or why she left acting. She never discussed her career with me. She did have one son. Unfortunately, I do not know his whereabouts.

I wish I had more information to share with you. My Dad didn't discuss much with me and I think this was as Marilyn wished.

You may have noticed the mention that Marilyn had a son. Despite searching for a child with any of her numerous surnames, no record of any birth has turned up to date. Research continues.

There's also some evidence that suggests that Randall may have had a very brief singing career, but that has not been verified. Still mysteries are what she thought of working with the Stooges and why she decided to give up her career in show business.

In any case, stay tuned as future issues of the *Journal* will report on other "lost" Three Stooges supporting players.

Norma Randall as "Miss Powered Flight."